

As a consumer, and an "early adopter" of many technologies, I wished to comment on the FCC's handling of the Digital Broadcast Copy Protection issue.

While I am unhappy about many things in the badly-handled transition to digital TV, this issue is what I see as one so grave I would be unwilling to switch to digital TV at all if it is not properly handled. I currently enjoy the right to videotape any program I wish on my VCR, and watch it at any time I choose. Giving broadcasters and content owners the ability to disable this capability at their whim is not something I am willing to tolerate. We should be moving towards the ability to watch whatever we want whenever we want. Just because Disney and their ilk wants to turn back the clock to 1970 and force viewers to watch when and what they choose to broadcast doesn't mean we have to allow it.

Hollywood is playing the FCC for a bunch of fools, one statement that they won't provide quality programming digitally because they are worried about piracy and the FCC wants to cave in and give in to their demands! Isn't this a lot like a kid threatening to leave the game and take his football with him if the other kids don't make him the quarterback? I am going to be far more likely to finally buy a digital television the more freedom I have. If some movie studios won't all their movies to be shown on digital TV, so be it. My cable system has well over 100 channels now, and only a few of them are movie channels, there will be plenty to watch.

The problem with the movie studios is that they are afraid of any change. The well known quote from Jack Valenti that compared the VCR to the Boston Strangler says it all. The VCR didn't destroy their market, and neither will digital TV without artificial restrictions on what you can and cannot do with the digital signal being broadcast over the public airwaves into our homes. Is the FCC really considering giving public airwaves for free to companies enriching themselves at the expense of the freedom of those Americans who own the airwaves?

And what of the people who have already purchased very expensive HDTV receivers? If I'm annoyed now as merely a potential customer waiting in the wings to see what happens before I commit my money, I can't imagine how angry I'd be if I found out the \$5000 TV I already purchased was not compatible with the HDTV standard that eventually emerged! This is exactly why I haven't even considered buying a digital set yet, the broadcasters expect that those who have paid a lot of money for the HDTV sets already will be willing to do it again if it turns out their sets won't work properly with the final standard.

One final thought. We live in a global economy, and whatever is demanded by the people, will be provided. If not legally by a company in the US, then via semi-legal imports from foreign companies. DVD owners buy players that play content intended for different regions (another scam by Hollywood to maximize their profits by limiting consumer freedom) If this proposed rule becomes the law of the land, and analog broadcasts are eventually eliminated forcing everyone to live under Hollywood's thumb, I won't feel even the tiniest bit of guilt in sending my money to some small-time overseas company selling hardware that ignores the broadcast flag, so that I might exercise the fair-use rights that the US Supreme Court has already ruled I have.

I know the FCC wants to move fast and get the digital transition completed so they can sell off all that analog TV bandwidth. But doing something like this in the middle of the transition is ridiculous! If the FCC does this and screws over those who have already purchased digital sets, why should I trust that they won't do it again a few years later, if Hollywood decides that the "broadcast

flag" is not enough protection after all (due to all those off shore imports I was talking about) and wants to change the rules again? So thanks anyway, FCC, but until you prove to me that you are governed by the people, instead of by the media companies, I'm going to count against you in your quest to get digital sets into 85% of American homes.